The Member then submitted details regarding the production of salt in the Thamarakulam *allom* before and after placing the *alloms* under the control of the Excise Department. The total area of the *alloms* was subsequently extended to 355 acres and the average output per cent was 16 *maunds* per annum The total quantity of salt consumed in the State every year was about 10 lakh's of *maunds*. If the existing area of 355 acres and the additional area of 130 acres to be opened could be made to yield salt at the rate of 33 *maunds* per, one cent, the entire quantity required for the use of the State could be found. Compared with Northern India and other Native States in India, Travancore had greater facilities for the manufacture of salt. The facilities afforded by Government for opening the land in the centre of Manakudi *kayal* which were under water were really praiseworthy. But the attitude of the Excise officers and subordinates was highly unsympathetic. The Excise Commissioner did not pay frequent visits to the *alloms* and give necessary advice and timely help to the owners of the *alloms*. For want of necessary help, the Variyoor *allom* was stopped and in spite of repeated petitions to Government nothing had been done to revive its working. There was an offer from a wealthy individual to work the Variyoor *allom* and deliver not less than 5,00,000 *maunds* every year and also furnish a security of Rs. 5,000 for its proper working. But the offer was rejected.

The Member then, pointed out that, if certain improvements were done for leaving a waterway 1,000 ft. in length for the flow of water from the Pazhayar into the sea through the Manakudi *Kayal*, the area available for the manufacture of salt could be increased severalfold and assigned in the names of private individuals and the loss incurred by the owners of the *alloms* on account of the excess water in the rainy season could be avoided. Such improvement work would also afford great relief to the poor people who lived in huts on the banks of the *kayal* and who were forced to desert their homes in times of flood.

In conclusion, the Member submitted the following suggestions for the consideration of Government:—

(1) A separate Salt Department should be organised with an expert at its head.

(2) The upkeep and maintenance of the *alloms* should be attended to by Government at an early date.

(3) Arrangements should be made to allow all the manufacturers equal profit.

(4) Necessary and timely advice and sufficient encouragement should be given to the manufacturers.

(5) Salt of superior quality should be sold at a cheap and uniform rate throughout the State.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

(4) EXCISE AND CUSTOMS.

23. Certain suggestions for the better administration of the Excise Department.

Mr. M. K. Govinda Pillai B. A., B. L. (Member, Trivandrum taluk) objected to too much of centralisation of power and authority in the Head of the Department, especially after the departmental reorganisation of 1084. The result is that he was not able to devote adequate attention to the more important matters connected with the adminstration of the Department, but much of his time was frittered away in small things, such as making appointments, granting leave, etc. The work of a Departmental Head had to be supervised and his efficiency tested by the Huzur Office through his diaries. So far as the Excise Department was concerned, the information of the Member was that the diaries of the Commissioner were not being submitted regularly and in time. They were sent up for several months together. Similarly, the Excise Commissioner also did not insist on the punctual submission of diaries to him by the Assistant Excise Commissioners and Circle Officers or examine them properly. The inspection work done by the Excise Commissioner was only in connection with his tours for abkari sales. There was no real

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

field inspection. *Inter alia* the Member also suggested the appointment of an expert in the Huzur to control the Excise Department. The increasing revenue of the department should not be the sole consideration. Money would be forthcoming wherever toddy or arrack was sold. They had formerly a kind of drink which was supposed to be better than champaigne. But that had been ruled out and after the advent of Mr. Nadar, a new kind of liquor was introduced by soaking *Karinjapatta* in arrack which was highly intoxicating. People eagerly purchased it and that was why the revenue had been going up. What was contended by the Member was that the policy pursued by the department of obtaining revenue at all costs and against principles of temperance was altogether mistaken. He next dealt with the necessity of checking and supervising the work of the subordinates of the department by the Commissioner and observed that the policy of Government or of the department should not be to increase the consumption of liquor. On the other hand, the policy should be to reduce it. But that was not the case now which was due to the vesting of too much authority and control in the Commissioner. The remedy suggested by the Member was reversion to the conditions that existed prior to the reorganisation of 1084. The Assistant Excise Commissioners should be in charge of Divisions and the Circle Officers should be placed under them. The number of Assistant Commissioners should be reduced and if it could not be done, more work should be got out of them. Under existing standing orders Petty Officers had power to charge cases without getting the sanction from Circle Officers. Section 28 of the Abkari Regulation gave power to an Abkari Officer on pay not less than Rs. 20 to enter and search any place and arrest any person. Formerly, there were two sets of officers—the Detecting Officer who was the Sub-Inspector and the Investigating and Charging Officer who was the Inspector. Both the functions had now merged in a Petty Officer on Rs. 20. That was unsatisfactory and it was necessary that the old order of things should be revived.

Dewan.—It is only an Abkari Officer on pay not less than Rs. 20 that can conduct search under section 28 and Government have defined who an Abkari Officer is. Government have ordered that only Excise Inspectors and Petty Officers in charge of Inspectors' duties should charge cases.

The Member, continuing, said that the Excise Manual was not an exhaustive compilation. It should contain useful information about the department like the British Manual. There should be a code of rules in regard to opium, customs, &c.

Speaking of salt, the Member submitted that the endeavour of the Department should be to supply from the local alloms the whole salt required for local consumption. At present out of the 10 lakhs of *maunds* required for consumption in the State, 6 lakhs were produced in South Travancore. The general impression in the country was that not only the whole quantity of salt required in the State could be manufactured from the local pans, but also that enough could be produced to feed the neighbouring State of Cochin also. Travancore being a maritime State, there were special facilities for salt culture and many people would come forward to start salt factories, provided they were given reasonable facilities. The import of foreign salt could thus be stopped altogether. Again, there were some places in middle and north Travancore where salt could be manufactured. If, as was stated, the salt from such localities was bad, it could be used as manure by the Agricultural Department, the salt from South Travancore being reserved for human consumption. In the matter of transport charges, contracts were being given to foreigners on higher rates, while there were natives who had offered to take up such contracts at less cost. To remedy the evils, the best thing would be to separate the control of Salt from the Excise Department and create a new Salt Department. The Member said that the attitude of the present Commissioner so far as local salt culture was concerned left much to be desired.

The Member then pleaded for the restrictions placed on the manufacture of sweet toddy being removed. He did not object to measures to prevent smuggling, but to restrict its manufacture except under a license was undesirable. Jaggery could be manufactured out of it. Similarly, there were *olatti*, *eta* and

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

cocoanut trees which yielded sweet drinks. The restrictions should be removed and the manufacture of sweet toddy actively encouraged.

Another matter of grievance was that licenses were being insisted on for the possession of pepper, ginger, cocoanut oil and other articles subject to export duty in the Shencottah taluk which was a source of great hardship. This restriction should be removed.

The Member suggested that shop rents should be collected not by the departmental men but by the taluk authorities, as such a duty was inconsistent with the detection and prevention of crime.

The subject of contracts was again a matter of complaint from the people. The giving of big contracts of the value of Rs. 2 or 3 lakhs should be done by Government as it was done before.

Lastly, the Member requested that the Nagercoil Distillery should be worked to its maximum capacity.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

24. Evils arising from the use of intoxicants by the people and the desirability of Government adopting measures to remedy the same.

Mr. R. Raman Pillai (Member, Quilon taluk) said that the evils arising from the use of intoxicants such as alcohol, opium, bhang and ganja by the people were very great in that the drinking habits of man tended to lower the resisting power of the human body, were greatly injurious to health and led to crimes. Those who avoided the use of intoxicants were found to be capable of resisting the parasites of malaria and other diseases. The question had been engaging the attention of all civilised countries in the world, movements were started everywhere to prohibit the use of intoxicants, and such movements had gained the general support of the people. He submitted that it was the duty of every civilised Government to take such steps as were necessary for preventing the evils arising from the use of intoxicants.

In conclusion, the Member submitted the following suggestions for the consideration of Government :—

(1) Government should declare that it was their intention to prevent the use of intoxicants as much as possible.

(2) Persons using intoxicants should not be entertained in Government service or allowed to practice as Vakils.

(3) The import of foreign liquor, except the quantity required for the use of Europeans, should be prohibited.

(4) The making and sale of native intoxicating drinks should be restricted.

(5) The use of opium and ganja should be prohibited except for medicinal purposes.

(6) The owners of factories and workshops in the State should be asked to take the necessary steps to prevent the workmen from using intoxicating drinks.

(7) The opening of drinking shops within towns and near markets should be discouraged.

(8) Restrictions should be imposed on keeping drinking shops open only for certain hours in the day.

(9) Books written on the evil effects of the use of intoxicants should be published and taught in all schools in the State, especially night schools.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

The Assembly adjourned at 5-27 P. M.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly